

Electronic cigarettes – nicotine

What is nicotine?

- Nicotine is an odourless, yellowish liquid that is the main addictive ingredient of tobacco and it can also be found in vapes.
- Nicotine works by mimicking some of the naturally occurring chemicals in the brain which produce a feeling of euphoria.
- Nicotine is addictive because the brain starts to rely on nicotine to work properly, becoming less sensitive to its own chemical, acetylcholine. Nicotine is particularly addictive to young people as their brains are still developing.

Is nicotine harmful?

- Nicotine is not the ingredient in cigarettes and vapes that causes cancer. The majority of the harmful health effects associated with smoking are caused by the other toxic chemicals in tobacco smoke, not nicotine itself.
- However, nicotine is very addictive and causes people to continue smoking tobacco, which contains lots of other more harmful chemicals and can lead to harmful health effects.
- As nicotine is addictive, it can lead to withdrawal symptoms if people go without nicotine for a period of time. These symptoms can be unpleasant and include strong cravings, irritability, restlessness, difficulty concentrating, sleep disturbances and changes in mood which can increase feelings of anxiety or depression.